

Book launch boost for ambitious chapel plan

A NEW book 20 years in the making has been published as part of the drive to raise cash for the rescue project at the Lye and Wollescote cemetery chapels.

Historical stories behind the headstone inscriptions are unveiled in "The Lye & Wollescote Cemetery and Chapels: A Victorian Cemetery and its Notable Burials."

And a book signing event is planned for the Christ Church Hall in Lye on Saturday, April 17 from 11am to 3pm.

The book is an expansion on a popular talk given by local history enthusiasts Jean Weston and Marlene Price. It covers the historical development of the Victorian cemetery, the architectural significance of the chapels building and the social history behind some of the headstone inscriptions.

The book is available from bookshops or by mail-order via the project website www.lyeand-wollescote.info

It was launched at a formal reception by Phillip Kitson, former managing director of The Lye Trading Company and of Kitson Steels. His forefathers are among the many local families featured in the book.

As well as a fascinating read, the book should raise awareness of the West Midlands Historic Buildings Trust project to rescue the cemetery chapels, a Grade II listed building that has been unused since 1993.

Recent

Proceeds from book sales are to support a project aimed at providing a viable new use for the chapels building.

Trust chairman Alan Smith MBE said: "This book has been 20 years in the making, through two generations of researchers.

"Our members Jean Weston and Marlene Price are the recent authors, having carried out meticulous and detailed additional research to build upon a



At the book launch Phillip Kitson, left, and Alan Smith MBE, right, congratulate authors Jean Weston and Marlene Price. Picture: Ned Williams

Ownership to go if the funds are found

DUDLEY Council has agreed in principle to transfer ownership of the chapels to the West Midlands Historic Buildings Trust when sufficient funding for the scheme is in place.

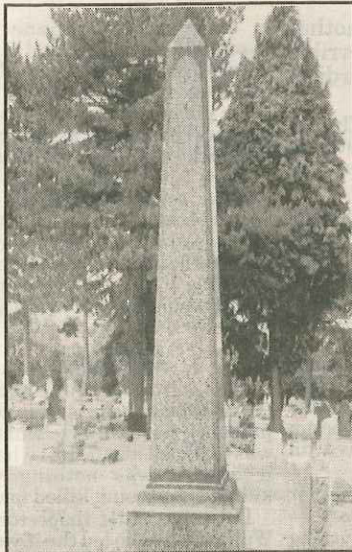
The total estimated project cost is around £1,264,000 of which some £456,000 has been promised.

A Heritage Grant application for the balance was turned down by the Heritage Lottery Fund due to insufficient funds.

Once the cash is raised, building work on the project is expected to take about 12 months.



A ridged casket-style gravestone featured in the book. It is a memorial to Mary and Joseph Pardoe, who died in 1901 and 1906 respectively. Joseph Pardoe was a Methodist Sunday School superintendent for 60 years.



This obelisk, also featured in the book, rises from the grave of Henry Millward and carries the inscription 'Whose earthly life closed October 17th 1896, aged 77'